UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1995/NGO/25
7 February 1995

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-First Session
Item 22 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

Written statement submitted by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 February 1995]

Religious restrictions in Tibet

1. Since 1985 the International Fellowship of Reconciliation has raised the question of religious restrictions in Tibet before the Commission. We therefore welcomed the decision of the People's Republic of China to invite the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance to visit China and Tibet in November 1994, in the hope that he could ascertain facts and recommend remedial measures. However, according to a number of reports, the Government of the People's Republic did not allow unrestricted access to the Special Rapporteur during his visit to Tibet. Five people who were in Tibet during the visit have given statements that they were unable to contact the Special Rapporteur because the team was attended by security forces, and its whereabouts were concealed from the public. Monks from certain monasteries and some students were not allowed in the centre of Lhasa during the visit.

Five days after the visit of the Special Rapporteur, seven monks from Sang-ngag Khang monastery, who we understand had wished to contact the Special Rapporteur, were arrested when they protested against political interference in their monastery. Such interference in the work of the Special Rapporteur prevents him from ascertaining the facts of the situation and negates the benefit of extending an invitation to him.

2. There is strong evidence that since July 1994 the Chinese authorities have increased restrictions on religious practice in Tibet. These restrictions, the most serious for 15 years, are not merely local initiatives but were endorsed by the "Third National Forum on Work in Tibet", a CCP Central Committee and State Council meeting held in Beijing in July 1994.

3. On the day of the Special Rapporteur's arrival in Tibet the Chinese authorities published the decision of the "Third National Forum" on religion, which states that the number of monks and nuns is to be fixed and spells out that the building of monasteries is to be halted. The decision demands political intervention in religious affairs, declaring that monks and nuns "must learn to reform all those aspects of religion which are not suitable to the socialist society ... we should reform canons and religious rituals that are unsuitable for the socialist society."

4. The restrictive policies adopted in July 1994 have already been implemented in Tibet. This can be seen from 20 testimonies written in November 1994 by Tibetans, including members of three monasteries and one group of nuns, for presentation to the Special Rapporteur. They were unable to hand them to him in person, but in December 1994 the documents were dispatched through other means and made available both to this organization and to the Special Rapporteur. These 20 testimonies give examples of the following current restrictions on religious freedom.

5. Ban on possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama. In August 1994 the Government banned the display of photographs of the Dalai Lama in offices and in the homes of government employees. Penalties include loss of earnings, being sacked, being "guilty of an offence", and unspecified "severe punishment". In some rural areas the ban has been applied not just to officials but to all residents. "In Nagchu prefecture a strict order was issued prohibiting keeping photographs of the Dalai Lama both on altars and on the person. In November 1994 nomads were forced to publicly burn, tear up or otherwise get rid of photographs of the Dalai Lama," according to one testimony. The ban on these photographs is the fulfilment of an order by the Third National Forum, which demanded that cadres, "the people", monks and nuns "should firmly make a clean break with the Dalai clique" 1/. Although the political views of the Dalai Lama may differ from those of the Chinese authorities, they do not constitute a threat to public order or fundamental freedoms as defined in article 1, paragraph 3, of the Declaration on Religious Intolerance.

1/ "The Golden Bridge to Reach the New Era ... Reference Materials for Publicising the Guidelines of the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet", TAR Communist Party Propaganda Circular, published in Tibet Daily (Tibetan language edition), 25 November 1994.

6. Ban on religious activities amongst government employee. Six of the 20 testimonies say that government officials in Tibet are now not allowed to possess "any religious objects such as statues, scriptures and reliquaries" or to perform "any kind of religious activities". One submission describes an official document called "Document No. 8", issued in July 1994 by the Chinese Communist Party, which bans government employees "from engaging in any form of activity which involves religious symbols". This prohibition applies both to employees and to their families, even where the other family members are not government employees. This is an act of discrimination against employees and their relatives based on their religious beliefs.

7. Restrictions on the reconstruction of monasteries.

"At present the number of monasteries, monks and nuns in our region are sufficient to fulfil the needs of the daily religious practice of the masses," says the Propaganda Circular published on 25 November 1994. This indicates that a limit has been set on the number of monasteries, as well as of monks and nuns, which will be allowed in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

8. Limit on admission of new monks and nuns. Several testimonies confirmed that since the July 1994 meeting officials have inspected monasteries and have ordered that any monks or nuns who are additional to the new limit must be expelled. In Sera monastery, Lhasa, where there are currently some 500 monks, the limit has been set at about 200. "A Chinese 'Work Team' arrived in the monastery with the warning that if they increase the number of monks above the fixed limit, then all the monks would be expelled," said a testimony about Sera. In the monasteries of Sang-ngag Khang and Gathab, no new admissions are allowed: "Even when a monk has died or discontinued his monastic life, it is still not permitted for him to be replaced," according to one statement. In November 1994 police visited Michungri nunnery near Lhasa and without explanation "ordered a number of nuns from this nunnery to leave for their respective homes."

9. Ban on admission of monks under 18 years. Several testimonies complained about the ban against monks under 18 years of age, which limits the choice of parents to find places of education for children. In Rato monastery in Chushur, "the parents of about 30 monks below 18 were ordered to take back their boys from the monastery," and would otherwise be liable to pay a fine of 1,500 yuan (about US$ 180, three times the average annual income). The ruling ignores the fact that many Tibetans regard monasteries as the best providers of education for their children.

10. Restriction on religious teaching. Religious teaching is restricted, and government permission has to be sought for senior lamas to give religious teachings and hold ceremonies. "When the monks of Sera Monastery requested Lama Kangyur Rinpoche to bestow the transmission by reading of the Kangyur, the TAR Government refused to grant permission," said one statement. Another reported that teachers in schools are not allowed to speak about religion in lessons. These restrictions violate article 5, paragraph 2, and article 6 (e) of the Declaration.

11. Punishments for monks and nuns accused of political dissent. Many statements testify that monks and nuns who have been suspected of dissident

opinions have been expelled from their religious institutions and discriminated against. "Monks and nuns who have been accused of political contacts are all deprived of educational opportunities. They are all unemployed and have no means to earn their living. The main reason is that these people ... opposed the State," it was alleged. Fifteen nuns were expelled from Garu nunnery near Lhasa in 1994 and were "banned from engaging in any religious activities and handed over to their parents with a warning that they are prohibited to enter any nunnery or monastery," according to one of the reports written for the Special Rapporteur.

12. Restrictions on the lives and movement of monks and nuns. The TAR Public Security Regulations of September 1994 instruct police to "strengthen, in accordance with the law, the management of temples, monasteries, and other places of religious activities." Accordingly police posts have been established in the main monasteries, so that "the monks are always under surveillance by agents inside and outside the monasteries," according to one testimony. This is especially true of monks belonging to the Gelugpa sect, associated with the Dalai Lama. Movement of monks and nuns is subject to restrictions. "The Chinese are imposing a ban forbidding the monks and nuns from visiting Lhasa on Holy Days," according to one statement. In most monasteries monks have to seek permission from lay officials and police before travelling.

13. Interference in the Selection of Religious Leaders. The Chinese authorities have taken over the process of selecting religious leaders, and have declared that only the State can recognize spiritual leaders. "In recognizing the reincarnations of the Tulkus [incarnate lamas] of Tibetan Buddhism, we must follow the relevant decisions of the State," announced the Third National Forum. This contradicts religious and popular tradition and is widely resented by Tibetans, who want the Dalai Lama and relevant religious leaders to be in charge of the selection process.

14. The International Fellowship regrets that the Chinese Government has imposed further restrictions on religious practice in Tibet and that it restricted access to the Special Rapporteur. IFOR commends the Special Rapporteur on his ongoing efforts and exhorts him to keep the situation in Tibet under close examination. We call upon the Commission to reinforce independent access to all Special Rapporteurs.

UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1995/NGO/26
6 February 1995

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-first session
Item 20 of the provisional agenda

RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by the Society of Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II) and the International Association of Educators for World Peace, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 February 1995]

The situation in Tibet

1. Recently, incidents in Tibet caused Tibetans to recall the days of the Cultural Revolution, which officially began on 28 August 1966 in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa. At the time, Lhasa was full of Red Guard factions fighting one another. People are once again being told that religion is poison and that its practice needs to be reformed for the good of the socialist system. Initial desecrations and destructions of monasteries, nunneries and temples had already occurred in the years subsequent to the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and continued during the Cultural Revolution.

2. The Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance in his report (E/CN.4/1994/79) last year stated: "Whereas as recently as 1959, there were some 6,250 monasteries and temples housing more than 592,500 monks and nuns, the following years were reportedly marked by considerable destruction wrought particularly between 1955 and 1961 and, to a lesser extent, during the Cultural Revolution."

Photographs of the Dalai Lama banned

3. Similar to the role of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, today the Chinese security forces are playing a major role in implementing government policies aimed at destroying the cultural, religious and national identity of the Tibetan people. New reports received by our organization say that the Chinese authorities recently issued an order declaring it illegal for Tibetans to put a photograph of the Dalai Lama on altars in monasteries or in homes. Tibetan cadres and functionaries of the Communist Party (CP) were instructed by their respective offices and departments to remove all photographs of the Dalai Lama from their homes and offices. Tibetans in these two categories of the Party were specifically targeted by the new ban imposed on photographs of the Dalai Lama. This was clear when the Chinese security forces ransacked the Tibetan Party members' homes and confiscated all photographs of the Tibetan leader.

4. In November 1994, the situation worsened as the Chinese authorities ruthlessly implemented the new control over religion. People involved in the business of selling photos of the Dalai Lama and other religious pictures were told to close down their shops. An official announcement was also issued to all departments and offices prohibiting Tibetans from displaying photographs of the Tibetan leader.

5. Article 88 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China guarantees freedom of religious belief. It further states that "the People's State holds that the question of religious belief is a private matter; belief or non-belief in religion relates to the personal freedom of an individual".

Party members told to denounce religion

6. However, at a meeting of CP members in June 1994, the following directives were read from an internally circulated document of the government of the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region" (TAR):

> "Communists are complete atheists - a communist fighter, to whatever nationality he may belong, should be a complete atheist.
>
> "The reason why communists do not believe in any religion is that the communist world outlook is basically opposed to the religious world outlook. The communist world outlook is Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism, while the religious world outlook is completely different in that all religions are idealistic.
>
> "But religion obstructs the implementation of the Party's general line for socialist construction and restricts the growth of communist thought of the labouring people. Because of its reactionary nature, religion is most likely to be used by enemies of the people to undermine socialist construction and the development of various nationalities in the motherland.
>
> "The heavy religious burden imposed on the people prevents them from developing production and improving their living standards.

"It spreads religious prejudice and seeks to undermine the unity of the motherland and the solidarity of the various nationalities.

"Since religion is harmful to the socialist construction of the motherland, it will inevitably prove harmful to the progress and development of the minority nationalities. Therefore, Party members of national minorities should denounce religion for the good of the socialist motherland."

Buddhist liturgical practices restricted

7. The traditional Tibetan Buddhist liturgical practice is to invite monks to one's home to recite religious texts at least once every year. Some of the litany lasts several days; others may last seven weeks, for example, in the case of a deceased. However, such practices by Tibetans who are residing in official residences or compounds are forbidden under the new restrictions on religious liberties.

8. The reason for such forms of restriction is that the Chinese authorities want all Tibetan Party members to be atheists, or at least appear to be so. For instance, Party members are now barred from entering temples and monasteries. In 1990, local Tibetans were banned from inviting monks or nuns to perform the litany at their homes. They were told to go to the monasteries/nunneries to avail themselves of such services. Furthermore, high learned monks' liturgical services are restricted even within the monasteries. The monks must seek the permission of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the TAR to preach in the monasteries. Preaching in public places or neighbourhood compounds is absolutely prohibited. The Democratic Management Committee (DMC), appointed by the Chinese authorities, collaborating with Work Unit Teams manages the administration of the monasteries and nunneries.

Political control of monasteries/nunneries tightens

9. A document issued on 30 March 1994 by the TAR Commission for Politics and Law and the Lhasa City Bureau Commission for Politics and Law instructs the Municipal United Front, the Religious Affairs Bureau and district authorities to closely monitor and document the religious activities in their areas. This document states:

"How many monasteries, hermits and small temples are there in the villages under the district jurisdiction? What are the names and locations of the monasteries, to be more precise, how many monasteries and nunneries are there? How many of them have government permission to operate? How many of them have been renovated or newly constructed without government permission? Do they house the government-allocated number of monks and nuns? How many monks and nuns are there currently in the district? Were they ever involved in the 1959 reactionary revolt or the 1987 separatist activities? How many times were they involved and what number of people participated? How many people have been detained, sentenced, sent to the 'Reform through Labour' programme, escaped and/or are under investigation? What is the most obvious situation in the monastery and what is the cause of it? How many reincarnate Lamas have been appointed and are they coming from the outside? Are they followers

of the separatist movement? Are they using religion as an excuse to be involved in separatist activities? Are these incarnate Lamas meddling in the administration, law and order, and education of the community?"

Education for Tibetan children deliberately obstructed

10. Religious teaching and prayers are not allowed in primary schools and institutions of higher learning in Tibet, nor is religious history part of the syllabus. It is said that the minds of the students should not be corrupted by "blind faith". These official restrictions have led many Tibetans in Tibet to send their children to India in order to receive a solid Tibetan and modern education, free from Chinese communist ideological influence.

11. On 26 June 1994, a source from Lhasa reported that Tibetans who are cadres or CP members were questioned about their intentions to send their children to schools in India. On 19 October 1994, the Chinese authorities in Lhasa instructed all Tibetan CP members and cadres to bring their children back from India and enrol them in schools of the TAR. This decision of the Chinese authorities also mentioned punitive measures like expulsion from the Party and denial of salary raises for parents who failed to comply with the directives. It was noted that the concerned child's resident card would be revoked and parents would face severe retribution if they did not bring their children back promptly.

12. The latest Chinese announcement appears to have been the consequence of a document issued at the Third Work Forum on Tibet Conference held in Beijing from 20 to 23 July 1994. Some top Chinese leaders participated in it. Mr. Radi, deputy secretary of the CP Committee 4th TAR Committee and chairman of the TAR's 6th People's Congress Standing Committee, is known to have initiated the drafting of the document. A reliable source informed the Tibetan government in exile that the main contents of the document involved the initiation of a campaign to ban pictures of the Dalai Lama and the issuing of an order according to which Tibetan CP members and cadres must take their children out of school in India and bring them back to TAR schools.

Conclusion

13. It is the opinion of the International Association of Educators for World Peace and the Society of Threatened Peoples, that the Chinese authorities consider religion an instrument that bolsters unity among Tibetans. They perceive this instrument to be the force behind the solidarity of the Tibetan people. Therefore, the Chinese authorities want to shatter it. There is little doubt about this if we carefully review the recent actions of the Chinese authorities.

14. The Commission on Human Rights should note that freedom of religion is something the Chinese authorities promulgated for the international community as a face-saving device in order to deny the ongoing religious persecution in Tibet. Under cover of constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom, the Chinese authorities continue to wage an undeclared war against the Tibetan people in order to suppress Tibetan aspirations.